

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-01 ICA-11 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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R 180750Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5119
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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ROME FOR VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, BU, VT, SCUL
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN REACTION TO DEATH OF THE POPE

REF: STATE 205941

1. SUMMARY: BULGARIAN PRESS COVERAGE DURING THE DAY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF POPE PAUL VI WAS VERY SPARSE. THE TEMPO PICKED UP MODERATELY WITH ARTICLES ON AUGUST 9 REPORTING BREZHNEV'S TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCE TO THE VATICAN, AND REPOGWING ON ZHIVKOV'S MESSAGE TO THE VATICAN OF "SINCEREST CONDOLENCES" FOLLOWED ON AUGUST 10. LOCAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RECOGNITION OF THE DEATH WAS MARKED BY A MEMORIAL SERVICE AT THE SMALL CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOFIA. ONE SHORO

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ARTICLE ON AUGUST 13 REPORTED THE FUNERAL WITH ATTENDANCE AT THE CEREMONIES BY THE BULGARIAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY, VENELIN KOTSEV, AND UNNAMED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE HOLY SYNOD. ON AUGUST 14, AN ARTICLE OF SOME LENGTH IN A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER PORTRAYED THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CYNICAL TERMS. END SUMMARY.

2. THREE NEWSPAPERS CARRUD ITEMS ON AUGUST 8. THE MOST EXTENSIVE COVERAGE APPEARED ON THE BACK OF ZEMEDEL'SKO ZNAME (ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN UNION). TASS ITEM FROM MOSCOW COVERING THE TELEGRAM SENT TO THE VATICAN BY RUSSIAN PATRIARCH PIMEN WAS PRINTED. A SECOND ARTICLE IN ZZ STATED THAT CARDINAL GIOVANNI BENELLI OF FLORENCE IS GIVEN THE BEST CHANCE TO SUCCEED POPE PAUL VI AND THAT THE PAPAL ELECTION WILL BE A "BNE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE TRENDS IN THE CHRUCH. ARTICLE NOTED THAT THE LATE POPE WAS FOR CONSOLIDATION OF WORLD PEACE, RELAXATION OF INTERNATIONAL TENSION, DISARMAMENT, AND THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. TRUD, THE PUBLICATION OF THE BULGARIAN PROFESSIONAL UNIONS, CARRIED TWO ARTICLES, ALSO BACK-PAGED, ONE A VERY SHORTENED VERSVN OF THE TASS ITEM ABOVE AND THE OTHER DATELINED FROM ROME AS BULGARIAN TELEGRAPH AGENCY (BTA) STORY ON PROCEDURES FOR ELECTION OF NEW POPE. RABOTNICHESKO DELO, SPEAKING FOR THE BCP, CARRIED ONLY THE BTA STORY ON PAGE FIVE. OTHER SOFIA NEWSPAPERS OF THE DAY IGNORED THE EVENT.

3. ON AUG 9, TRUD AND RABOTNICHESKO DELO CARRIED SAME WELL-BURIED ARTICLE FROM BTA DATELINED FROM MOSCOWMN AUG 8 REPORTING BREZHNEV'S TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCE TO THE VATICAN, QUOTING TELEGRAM IN PART: "...THE STATEMENTS OF POPE PAUL VI IN FAVOR OF PEACE, DETENTE, AND THE CEASING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE ARMAMENTS RACE WILL REMAIN IN THE MEMORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL." ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOFIA NEWS, A WEEKLY TOURIST HAND-OUT, SIMPLY STATED: "ROME - THE VATICAN ANNOUNCED THAT POPE PAUL VI HAS DIE."

4. ON AUG 10, FOUR NEWSPAPERS (RABOTNICHESKO DELO, ZEMEDEL'SKO ZNAME, COOPERATIVNO SELO -- MINISTRY OF

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AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INDUSTRY, AND NARODNA MLADZHZH --
KOMSOMOL), CARRIED SAME BRIEF FRONT-PAGE ARTICLES NOTING
THAT TODOR ZHIVKOV HAD SENT A TELEGRAM OF "SINCEREST
CONDOLENCES" TO THE VATICAN. NARODNA ARMYA (MINISTRY OF
NATIONAL DEFENSE) CARRIED SAME ARTICLE ON PAGE THREE.

5. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, LOCAL RECOGNITION OF THE POPE'S
DEATH WAS OTHERWISE LIMITED TO A MEMORIAL SERVICE CONDUCTED
BY THE BISHOP OF PLOVDIV AT THE VERY SMALL CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN SOKA AT WHICH THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY MADE THE
STRONGEST TURNOUT. WE ESTIMATE THAT 20-30 BULGARIANS
ATTENDED THE 11 AM SERVICE AND THREE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX
PRIESTS SAT IN ROW BEHIND THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY. PLOVDIV
BISHOP DELIVERED EULOGY COVERING EVENTS OF POPE PAUL'S REIGN. NO
MILITIA WERE NOTED IN THE AREA OF THE CHURCH, EVEN THOUGH
THE TRAFFIC JAM OBSTRUCTED THE MOVEMENT OF DELIVERY VAF
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TO THE STORES AND SMALL FACTORIES IN THE AREA.

6. ON AUGUST 13, RABOTNICHESKO DELO CARRIED BACK PAGE
ARTICLE ON THE FUNERAL NOTING THAT THE BULGARIAN AMBASSADOR
TO ITALY, VENELIN KOTSEV, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BULGARIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND HOLY SYNOD ATTENDED THE CEREMONIES IN
ROME. (WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE
BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES TRAVELLED FROM
SOFIA FOR THE CEREMONIES OR WERE IN ROME.)

7. THE MOST EXTENSIVE COVERAGE APPEARED IN THE WEEKLY
NEWSPAPER OF THE BULGARIAN UNION OF JOURNALISTS, POGLED,
AUGUST 14. IN A STRONGLY CRITICAL ARTICLE TITLED, "VATICAN:
BEFORE THE COMING OF THE NEW LANDLORD," WRITTEN BY VENETA

MOMCHEVA, AUTHOR COMMENTS ON THE RECENT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AS HAVING COME FROM A PERIOD OF SUPPORT FOR THD FORCES OF FACISM AND REACTION TO MOVE CLOSER TO THE "IDEAS OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE." THE VATICAN IS CRITICIZED FOR HAVING ALLIED ITSELF WITH "CIRCLES OF REVENGE" FOR NOT RECOGNIZING THE POST WWII BOUNDARIES OF EUROPE AND FOR HAVING ACCLAIMED THE CREATION OF NATO WITH "COMPLICATED LATIN PHRASES". MOMCHEVA STATES THAT THE "OBJECTIVE PROCESSES OF PROGRESSIVE CHANGE" IN INTERNATIONALCELATIONS ARE FORCING THE CHURCH TO "LOOK WITH A FEELING OF RESPON-SIBILITY" TO EARTHLY MATTERS. CITING THE ENCYCLICAL "PACEM IN TERRIS" OF JOHN XXIII AS THE FIRST EFFORT BY THE CHURCH TO TAKE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND THE RELAXATION OF INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS, MOMCHEVA CREDITS PAUL VI WITH EXPANDING AND DEEPENING THIS TREND, BUT WITHOUT STIFING THE "ANTI-COMMUNIST SPECULATIONS OF THE VATICAN PROPAGANDA MACHINE". SHE PRAISES PAUL VI FOR ESTABLISHING AND CONSOLIDATING CONTACTS WITH "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" AS AN "INNOVATIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COURSE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE VATICAN," ALTHOUGH "INVARIABLY ACCOMPANIED BY THE PSALMS OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST HIGHER CLERGY." VATICAN RADIO AND THE PRESS OF THE CHURCH ARE ACCUSED OF SPREADING "PROVOCATIONSON THE RIGHTS OF BELIEVERS IN THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AND ON REPRESSION OF CATHOLICS IN THE USSR," WHICH ENCOURAGES ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO CONDUCT "FIRST RATE SUBVERSION AGAINST THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" UNDER THE GUISE OF RELIGIOUS ACTIV-ITY. THE VATICAN IS CRITICIZED FOR ITS INVOLVEMENT IN ITALIAN POLITICS, SPECIFICALLY CITING THE THREAT OF EXCOM-MUNICATION BY THE CHURCH . THE ARTICLE CHAJCTERIZES THE POSITION OF THE VATICAN ON FOREIGN POLICY AS CONSISTING OF "DUPLICITY AND INCONSISTENCY," WHILE THE ATTITUDES ON SOCIAL QUESTIONS ARE CONTRADICTORY, WITH SANCTIONS AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE POSITIONS TO THE "LEFT". THE FINANCIAL PRACTICES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE CRITICIZED AS MONEY BEING THE "EIGHTH SACRAMENT" AND MULTINATIONAL MONOPOLIES THE PREFERRED FINANCIAL PARTNERS OFHHE VATICAN (WITH INVESTMENT OF 100 BILLION LIRE IN ITALIAN COMPANIES, AND DIRECTING ECONOMIC EXPANSION TOWARD COUNTRIES IN AFRICA AND SOUTHEASTERN ASIA).
GARTHOFF

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